2:Seligman & Seligman E-5 (1909-1910) 1932
FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

631 on page 45. Gar, the northern division, has Golbaß as its capital. Each division has five provinces; those of Lwak from south to north are Tung or Tonga, Odong or Panyikang (Fenikang, with [778] capital Fenikang, containing the great shrine of Nyakang, perhaps the holiest of all Shilluk shrines), Adod or Dithin, and Padit, while Gar is divided into Dithwok, Dimoth, Non, Dhyang Dwong, and Jangoriang; the two latter are more or less equivalent to the geographical area called Mwom, embracing the most northerly portion of the Shilluk kingdom with its capital Akurwa, the site of one of the most important shrines of Nyakang.

The chiefs of Mwom and Tonga were said to wield most power; the chief of Kwom is naturally somewhat eclipsed by the presence of the king in this district.

361 It is difficult to describe a Shilluk village; in fact, the word is hardly applicable to the Shilluk settlement. In typical Shilluk country on the west bank a series of small hamlets may be seen lying from a quarter to a mile or more back from the river, succeeding each other, as has been well said, like beads on a string. Most of these hamlets are small, consisting of only a few homesteads. Each homestead 592 belongs to one householder and contains some three or four huts 342 surrounded by a fence of millet stalks. One hut is the sleeping apartment of the householder and his wife—if there is more than one wife each woman will have her own hut—one is used for cooking, and others may be assigned to servants, or slaves if any are attached to the family. The householders in each hamlet are members of a single 614 clan, with descent in the male line, and are often closely related by 621 blood.

Thus the hamlet is both a social and a local group, and though the usual word for clan is *kwa* (which is also used for "family" or "ancestor", and for "grandfather") our informants at Fenikang often used the territorial prefix *pa* (or *fa*), which literally means "place", for the group that occupied one hamlet. It is clear that members of the same *kwa* are clansmen, whether they dwell in one hamlet or are located at a distance. Another word that seemed to have the same significance was *gol*. Actually, as Mr. Heasty 613 informs us, this is a smaller unit formed within the *kwa*, arising 614 through some influential man starting a settlement of his own, when 621 his descendants (living there) form his *gol* until they become a large and powerful unit, take a new name, and become a *kwa*. Thus the *gol* Nyikako near Doleib Hill takes its name from an influential

2:Seligman & Seligman E-5 (1909-1910) 1932
FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

only after this is he "the chosen of God" (*arwyi Juok*) and fit incumbent of his new office. The first ceremonial duty of the high-chief is to visit the king, who presents him with an ox, more costly presents being made to the high-chiefs of Mwom and Tonga. Every high-chief has his assistant (*nyal kwome*), who exercises authority as occasion requires. The village chiefs are chosen by their communities, and we believe all these offices to be in the main hereditary, though further investigation is here necessary, as it is with regard to the ministerial council, mentioned by Hofmayr, whose members are selected by the king.

Fashoda—not to be confused with Kodok, the Fashoda of international fame—is the royal capital, *fo reth* ("the place of the king"), from which the king has ruled for many decades. Yet it was not always so: Father Banholzer told us that formerly each Shilluk king reigned from and was buried in his native village. Fenikang is the traditional capital of Nyakang and probably of his immediate successors. Perhaps, too, some of the early kings ruled the country from Tanga (Doleib Hill). Tugo is said to have been the first king to live at Fashoda; whether this is correct or not, Fashoda certainly was not the *fo reth* of all the kings who succeeded him, though Nyadwai and Yur Adodit ruled the country from villages in its neighbourhood. Nyadwai lived and died at Kodok, where in 1909 we were shown the remains of the tree which according to tradition sprang from his grave; actually the association seems to have been that it stood near his dwelling and that he would often sit under it. Malakal and Walajok are also said to have been capitals in their time.

The king and his many wives live at Fashoda (Pl. V, Fig. 1). The king's dwelling when we saw it in 1910 consisted of four huts, no better built than those of his people and lacking the ostrich-egg and spear of the royal shrines. They stood well above the rest of the settlement on an artificial mound, called Anurwic (shown on Pl. VI), which may have been some ten feet high, and was said to have been built by the tenth king, Tugo.

The king observes the same marriage prohibitions as his people, even remote relatives on both sides of the family being forbidden; thus the king and all male descendants of the king must marry commoners, while daughters of the king should not marry at all, though foreign influence is, we believe, slowly modifying the old practice. Mr. Heasty writes that unless the king takes a

2:Seligman & Seligman E-5 (1909-1910) 1932
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Plate VI

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Fashoda, Anuewak

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778

Akurwa, shrine of Nyakang in open

2:Seligman & Seligman E-5 (1909-1910) 1932
FJ23 Shilluk FJ23
Annak FJ4

Plate X

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K4

Shilluk homestead, grave in foreground

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Annak

3:Westermann E-5 (1910) 1912 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

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[Facing p. 42]

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1. Group of Native Men 2. Group of Boys

3. Girls Sewing School at Dolaib Hill

[Facing p. XLVIII (B)]

I. OCCUPATIONS.

1. Housebuilding.

*539 *Tyŋlɛ wɔt kyɔr, ka tʃɔ (tʃɔ), ka ŋkɛŋ kɛl, ka ŋkɛ tyɛl, ka mɔŋŋ kɛ́t tyɛl wɔt, ka chwɛch, make tyɛl ɛ́mɔŋ, ka ɟkɔŋ dil, ka gɔr. Ka make chɛ́t tʃɛ́ŋkɛl, ka wɔŋ ŋɛ́, ka kwɔr dwɔt, ka gɛ ryɔ, ka gɛ mɛ́ch fɛ́t, ká tkyɛ́t ɛ́ɛ́t, ka dil kɛ́t, ka tyɛlɛ kyɔr, ka tyɛl tʃɛ́, ka tɛgwɛ́ kwɛ́t, ká wɔt mɛ́k, ká dil kɛ́ŋ. Ka dyɛ́ŋ kɛ́t, ka tɛ́t, ka tɛgwɛ́ wɛ́rɛ́ wɛ́k. Ka wɔt tʃɛ́, ká ŋkɛ́ŋ ɟɛ́ɛ́l chɛ́ɛ́y, ka kɛ́ŋ, ka chɛ́ŋ́ twɛ́ch, ká tɛ́t, ká ŋkɛn nɛ́r, ká kɛ́ŋ́ dwɔt, ka ɟɛgɛ mɛ́l, ka ŋɛ́ mɛ́ɛ́yɛ́, ka kwɔn kɛ́ŋ́, ka ɛ wɛ́ɛ́y. Ka wɔt kɛ́ŋ́ ɛ dʃɛ́ɛ́l, ka ɛ kɔny ɟɛ́ kwɛ́r, mɛgɛ nɛ́ŋ́ wɔt kɛ́ŋ́, ka wɔt kɛ́ŋ́ wɛ́ɛ́, ká dyɛ́ŋ́ wɛ́ɛ́ kɛ́ŋ́. Ka wɛ́y wɔt twɛ́ch, ka chɛ́ɛ́w wɔt nɛ́ŋ́, ka tɛ́ɛ́ŋ́ (tʃɛ́ɛ́ wɔt) tyɛ́ɛ́, ka wɔt ŋɛ́r, ka mɛ́ɛ́n, ka tɛ́ŋ́ŋ́ ɟwɛ́ɛ́ch, ka kɛ́l tɛ́t, ka ɟɛ́ dʃɛ́ɛ́t ɟɛ́ɛ́ɟɛ́. Ka ɟyɛ́ɛ́ŋ́ kɛ́ŋ́, ka ɟɛ́ch fɛ́t, ka ɟɛ́ dʃɛ́ɛ́n ɟɛ́ŋ́ wɔt.

• 342 *539 The foundation trenches of the house are dug out, and are smoothed off. Mud is brought, and thrown into the foundation trenches; and water is poured into the foundation trenches. Now the walls are built; after four days the door-opening is made round; then they build again, and when five days have passed, they begin to make the roof. Poles are brought, they are burnt (to make them hard), and then cut, so that they are of equal length. Roof-sticks are cut, and they are tied up in a circle, and a circular ditch (corresponding to the poles tied together) is dug, and the ends of the roof-sticks are put into it, and buried. Now the roof is constructed; grass is twisted into a rope, with which the poles are tied together. When this is done, the roof-sticks are taken away, and the roof is lifted upon the wall. The junction between the wall and the thatch-poles inserted into it is made tight with mud, the lower roof-ends are tied to the wall, and are tied together. Then grass is cut, and the craftsman[1] is sent for; he climbs on the roof, takes a rope, and binds the grass on the poles. Thus he makes the roof, till only the point of the roof is left. The proprietor of the house now brings a hoe, which is for the making of the roof-point. (When he has given it to the craftsman), the roof-point is made. Then a sheep is given to the craftsman. The surface of the roof is beaten smooth, the dripping-eaves are cut even, a door is made, the floor of the house is filled up with mud, and is made hard and even. A door is worked, the fence is constructed, and then the people move into the new house. A fowl is brought, and left on the ground (as a sacrifice), and the people move into it.

[1] Thatch-maker.

3:Westermann E-5 (1910) 1912 FJ23 Shilluk F923

A Second Report on Housebuilding.

By R. W. Tidrick, of Doleib Hill.

Housebuilding among the Shilluk[1] is a trade which comparatively few men learn, whether it is because apprentices are discouraged from learning it,—or whether they do not want to learn, or cannot learn the trade well, I do not know. A well constructed tukl is neat and of really fine appearance. Dwelling houses are usually of the same size, conical in shape, walls of mud, sometimes reinforced with poles or corn stalks. The roofs are thatched with two kinds of grass. Family class properties which kind may be used in thatching the house.

Every adult member of the family as a rule has a part in construction. The women cut and carry in the grass and corn stalks and bring the water for mixing the mud for the walls. The men bring in the poles for the roof, make the rope, mix and carry the mud and do the real building of the house.

The material is usually collected for some time beforehand. Grass is cut and cooked, poles are brought from the timber and by wetting and heating are brought into the proper shape for rafters. Large circular bands for bracing the rafters and tying the thatch and grass to are made of withs of long coarse grass wrapped closely with rope. The rope for this use and for tying the grass down is made from a tall grass that has a long sheath. The grass is cut and brought in, and these sheaths are stripped off and after being soaked in water are bruised with clubs until the fiber comes apart easily. It is then dampened and twisted into rope. The rope maker sits on the ground holding the rope between his toes, and forms the rope by constantly adding new fiber and rolling the rope between the palms of his hands. It is made two-ply about one fourth of an inch thick.

The mud is prepared by mixing manure, ashes or fine broken dry grass with sandy earth. The mixing is done with the feet. The first step in construction is naturally the foundation. This is made by digging a shallow circular trench where the wall is to stand. The men carry the mixed mud in their hands, which must be quite stiff, and drop it in the trench. The builder forms it into the desired shape with his hands. A layer about six inches deep is put on at a time. But two or three layers a day are added. A little above the foundation an elliptical band of grass about three feet in depth is put in place to form the door. As the wall is built up the mud is built against this, which remains in form leaving the door the desired shape. Later the grass is removed. Toward the top the wall is flanged out like the mouth of a bell to receive the roof. Few houses have windows; when windows are made, they are scarcely six inches in diameter. In forming the roof the first step is the same as for the wall: a shallow circular trench is dug with the same circumference as the inner

[1] i. e. Shilluks.

3:Westermann E-5 (1910) 1912 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

342 circumference of the finished wall. About two feet inside the trench are set forked stakes about two feet high and four feet apart. The rafter poles are now placed with heavy end in trench and resting in the forks of these poles, their tops are brought together and securely tied. The heavy grass-bands are now fastened both above and under the poles at regular distances from bottom to top of roof. Corn stalks or cane are woven in between the bands and poles thickly. The roof now has its final conical shape. The roof is ready to be raised and is picked up and placed evenly upon the wall. A layer of reed is then put over the lower end of the rafter poles, to keep it firmly in place. The first work in thatching is to put on what the Shilluk call the apron of the house. A short layer of grass is put around the top of the wall and tied securely to the thatching. The thatcher then starts his course straight up the roof and works around the house, finishing the entire length of the roof as he goes around. The grass is tossed up to him in small bundles, which he places in position several at a time and removes the bands and ties them down tightly. With a paddle-shaped stick he evens up the ends of the grass, so that when the roof is finished nothing but the butt ends of the grass are exposed, and these lie as evenly as though they had been laid separately by hand. At the top the grass is brought together like a spire and wrapped with rope and rope bands. The grass lies on the roof from six inches to a foot thick, and if kept free from white ants, will last for five or six years.

2. Different kinds of Soil.

134	ŋɔ́ɔ́ black, rich earth	ɔ́ɔ́ɔ́ brownish earth as found	
123	bwɔ́jɔ́ sandy ground	on river-banks, used for	
	ɔ́ɔ́jɔ́ red earth as found on ri-	making pots	
	ver-banks, used for ma-	ɔ́ɔ́ɔ́ɔ́ red sand	
	king pots	ɔ́ɔ́ɔ́ sand, dust.	

3. Field-produce.

241	kyɔ́ dura	ɔ́ɔ́ɔ́ɔ́ an eatable ground	
124	ɔ́ɔ́ɔ́ɔ́ sesame	kjɔ́ɔ́ a ground for calabashes,	
	ɔ́ɔ́ɔ́ beans	not eatable	
	bɔ́ɔ́ɔ́ cotton	ɔ́ɔ́ɔ́ɔ́ɔ́ onion	
	ɔ́ɔ́ɔ́ a small, sweet ground, in	ɔ́ɔ́ɔ́ɔ́ tobacco	
	vain.	ɔ́ɔ́ɔ́ɔ́ maize.	

4. Different kinds of durra.

The common name: kyɔ́. The common name for white dura: ɔ́ɔ́ɔ́ɔ́.

Part II

THE SOCIAL ORGANISATION, POLITICAL STRUCTURE AND MAIN CULTURAL FEATURES OF THE NILOTES

INTRODUCTION

The structure and organisation of the Nilotic tribal groups, though showing similarities in many respects and suggesting a certain degree of progressive variation from one or two structural types, cannot be considered in one description chiefly owing to the complexity of the subject. It is therefore proposed to consider the main Nilotic groups in turn and in conclusion to point out some of the features common to all.

Except where specifically mentioned, the information relating to a people applies to their indigenous organisation.

THE SHILLUK

GENERAL

The Shilluk live in a number of hamlets and settlements which, almost without a break, line the west bank of the White Nile from about 11°N. Lat. to Lake No in the south. There are also a few settlements on the east bank and along the lower reaches of the Sobat river.

They are predominantly agricultural and sedentary, owning comparatively few cattle. The long river frontage of their habitat gives them abundant water and grazing in the dry season for the few cattle they do possess. There are no large scale transhument movements in the dry season to find cattle pastures. Only youths go into dry season cattle camps which are situated mainly on islands in the river or in dry water-courses near it. The cultivations are likewise nearby, either in the settlement area or on land a short distance away. Ecological conditions therefore enable the people to remain in the same place all the year round and render the settlement areas self-contained economically.

SOCIAL ORGANISATION AND POLITICAL STRUCTURE

TERRITORIAL DIVISIONS AND KINSHIP UNITS

The *Nuaretowl (pl)*

The gol is the smallest social unit in the tribe and usually consists of about two hundred to a four. Every married man has a gol which he occupies with his wife, or wives, and children. In addition

15: Oyler M-5 (ca. 1918) 1926 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

the storm is very severe an offering must also be made. A hoe must be placed in front of the door. If no hoe is in the house then a fish spear, or something else made from iron, may be used instead. When a hoe or spear is thus offered it is taken back to the ordinary uses after the storm. In case they can find nothing of iron to offer, one of the inmates of the house takes a handful of dura and kneels in front of the door. He then turns back the door mat, and, reaching out, he casts the grain upward into the air.

Sometimes the lightning strikes (mal agge, heaven hits). In former times when a house was struck by lightning each house in the circle had a rope tied around the apex of the cone-shaped roof. A bit of skin from the sacrificed sheep was supposed to be tied to each house. Then the houses were all connected by ropes running to these ropes. I have seen this arrangement only once. To the rope at the apex of the house old bones and snail shells are often tied. They are afraid to move the walls of the house that has been struck, and so the walls are pushed inward. If someone has been killed in the house the walls form a sort of earth covering, as he is not buried as other men. The custom in regard to electrical disturbances are changing. Many of the rites now practised are borrowed for the Dinkas, but seem to be well established at the present time.

According to the present usage, when a house is struck, the owner usually calls a servant of Deñ (Bâñ Deñ). After the servant of Deñ arrives he surveys the place and then exclaims, "Deñ says bring an ox." If the people are poor he may demand a sheep only. He usually adds, "I do not ask for this offering, but Deñ asks for it." The offering is then brought, it is killed, cooked and eaten in the same place. After the meat has been eaten the bones are carefully collected, and a large branch from a higlig tree is stuck up on the site of the house. Then the bones of the sacrifice, with its horns and tail, are hung on this branch. Each guest partaking of the feast is supposed to offer an iron bracelet, and these bracelets are also hung on the higlig branch.

A person who has had a narrow escape from death by lightning may become a servant of Deñ (Bâñ Deñ), if he so desires. When they travel they say, "Deñ asks for this," and few people will refuse them when they beg in that way. In one case a person who dreamed he had been struck by lightning became a servant of Deñ.

15: Oyler M-5 (ca. 1918) 1926 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

When someone has been stunned by lightning, the proper treatment is for two men to take the patient by the heels and, with his head hanging down, to dip his head in water. He is then taken from the water, but continues to hang head downward. After he has been held in this position for some time, snails and frogs will pour out of his mouth, and he will then be restored to health. One man assured me that he had once seen the frogs and snails come from a patient. 752 821

When a person is killed by lightning he is not buried as other men. If his death occurs in a house the walls are pushed down over him, and form his grave. If he is killed out in the open, each person in the village is supposed to bring a bit of earth and throw on him, and thus the grave is formed. It is thought that anyone who refuses to do that will be struck by lightning. 766 821

The person who is killed by lightning is not mourned as other people. The ox that is killed immediately after his death is looked upon as an offering to Deñ rather than as a sacrifice for the dead. The relatives are not to weep for them as they do for those taken by disease. The thought seems to be that the man who is struck by lightning is called by Deñ, and that it is an honour to be called by Deñ, and that weeping and lamenting over such a death would be dishonouring to Deñ. Death by lightning is looked upon as bad, but not as bad as death that comes through disease. The family of the deceased is supposed to be prospered. They feel that the family has made an offering to the higher powers, and they in turn should be blessed by the higher powers for the offering they have made. [782] 767 821

When a house is struck by lightning the war cry is given. The men all run to the river with the tips of their spears pointing upward. The spears are waved in imitation of the lightning. This is done so that Deñ will fear and return to the upper regions. Then they run to the boat landing where they throw their spears on the ground. Then each man cuts a bit of green grass. He carries this grass to the fire and throws it on the blaze. Occasionally, instead of running to the river in that manner, they run to the fire with their hands raised as if in supplication, and they give the war cry as they run. 787 821

A day or two after the fire, as soon as the walls are cooled, the people assemble. If no one has been killed in the house, a sheep is killed and cooked and beer is made. After the sheep is cooked, bits are cut from 342 782 821

15: Oyler M-5 (ca. 1918) 1926 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

342 782 821 the liver, stomach, heart, tongue, upper lip, lower lip, and lungs. The walls of the house are then pushed down, and these bits are cast on the mound. They are to be thrown by a servant of Deñ. The soup in which the meat was cooked is taken by the chief servant of Deñ present, and the next in rank takes a gourd of beer, and they pour these upon the mound at the same time that the meat is thrown on it. The people then dance, while they sing a song of Deñ. While the servants of Deñ put the higig branch (ŋk Deñ) in place, the rest of the people run to the river to take a bath.

751 821 At the close of the rainy season the family of the person who has been struck by lightning invite the people of the village to drink beer. One gourd full of the beer is thrown into the air for Deñ. This observance often becomes an annual event in the family. They think it helps to keep the lightning away.

342 821 778 A house is never built on the exact location of a house that has been struck by lightning, though another may be built near the place. An object that has been struck by lightning is sometimes worshipped. Sacrifices may be killed and eaten in front of it.

177 Many of these ceremonies are borrowed from the Dinkas. Deñ is worshipped by the Dinkas; they are "Deñ's people." He is the spirit of the rain, or the rain.

132 The rains at the beginning and close of the rainy season are very often accompanied by considerable electrical displays. It is small wonder that the natives beheld in amazed terror the wonderful power of nature, and it is still less cause to marvel that they try to placate the powers of the storm. The westerner, with his scientific knowledge of electricity, is often awed by the gleam of the lightning and the crash of thunder, and it is not surprising that the uneducated native is even more awed by it.

Rites connected with the Dance Initiation.

882 The Shilluk lad looks forward with eagerness to the time when he will be permitted to join in the dances of his people. Not only does he long for the time because of the social pleasure, as dancing is the chief amusement of the people, but the right to dance carries with it other privileges.

The homesteads are arranged in roughly horse-shoe shape around an open space in which are tethered the sheep and cattle of the hamlet. Within this space is usually a very large hut (*lwak*) used for animals in the rains and throughout the year as a guest-house and general village club. There is also usually a normal sized hut, with no surrounding fence, known as the *gwa*, which is used as a dormitory by the unmarried men. In this hut are put the ashes of the cattle dung with which the young men cover themselves at night for warmth and protection from flies. Some villages have a tree in the central circle, but more often there is a complete and inhospitable absence of shade.

The homestead (*gol*) consists of two huts between which is an area enclosed by a fence of dura stalks or rough grass matting. The family group inhabiting the homestead is called also (presumably by transference) *gol*, and it is in this latter sense that the word *gol* will be used in this note.

In this sense *gol* is the smallest (though important) social unit in the tribe. An unmarried man does not own a homestead. All unmarried persons live in the homestead and adhere to the *gol* of their father. If their father is dead they adhere to the *gol* of their eldest married brother or, if they have none, to their deceased father's (married) brother. The owner of the homestead to which they adhere is the leader of their *gol*, and as such is responsible for the behaviour of its members. This vicarious responsibility on the part of the *gol* leader is a corollary to the principles of the ownership of cattle (and sheep). The cattle of the *gol* are owned and disposed of by the *gol* leader alone, and since the remedy for a wrong is a payment of cattle it follows that he and not the actual malefactor is held responsible. The position resembles that of the Roman family where the *pater-familias* alone is *sui juris*, all others being *alieni juris*. The Shilluk *filius familias*, however, becomes *sui-juris* on marriage which the Roman son did not. The vicarious responsibility of the *gol* leader has the convenient aspect that the *gol* leader is more easily found by the arm of the law than the actual malefactor because of the fact that he owns a homestead.

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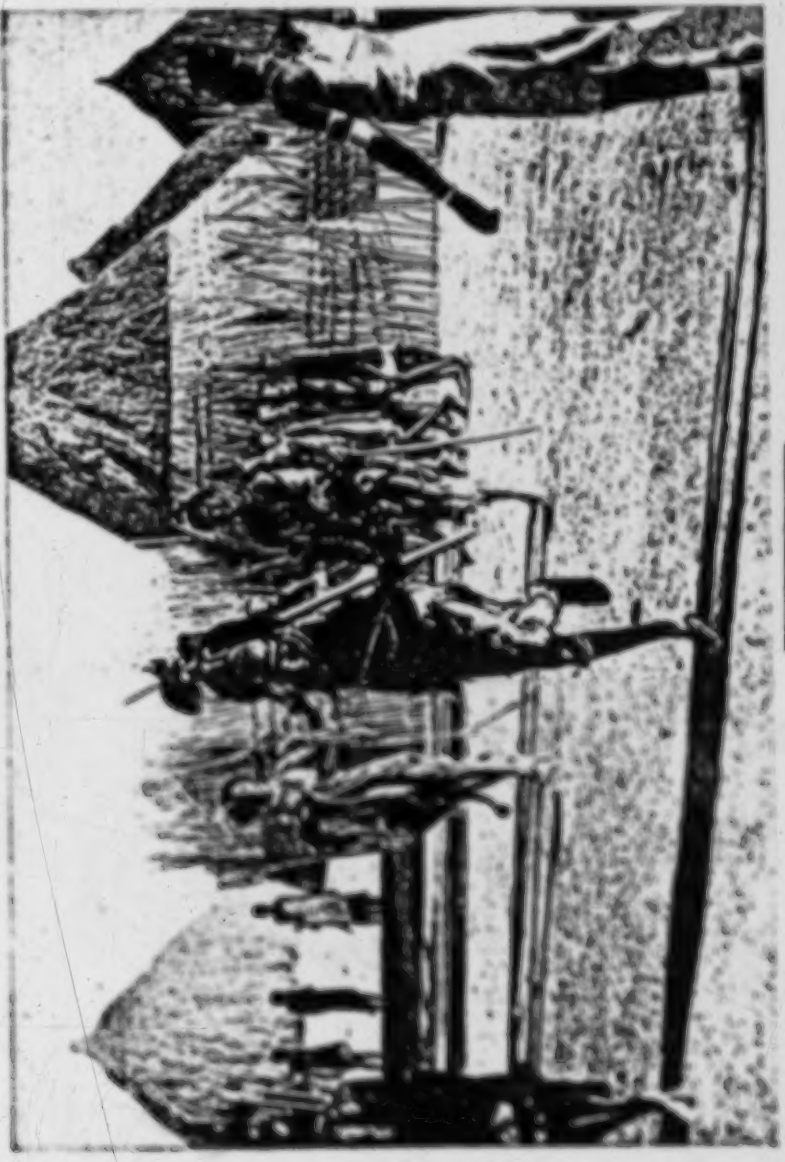

[p. 62 D]

19: Howell & Thomson E, G-5 (1943-1944) 1946
FJ23 Skillak FJ23

The Funeral Dance of Rain Paint.

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1.—Skillak trumpeters with koala horns.

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2.—The drums of Rabil.
There were six of these set vertically in the ground.

[FACING P. 24]

19: Howell & Thomson E, G-5 (1943-1944) 1946
FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

THE MARCH OF NYIKANG AND DAK TO NYAKE.

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1.—Dak leads, Some by his Secretary. Nyikang follows. Behind is the forked branch known as "Nyikang's Rod" and the basket which holds his food.

[342]

2.—Nyikang and Dak leave the village of Ash Pabi.

[FACING P. 40]

19: Howell & Thomson E, G-5 (1943-1944) 1946
FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

THE FIRST DAY OF THE INITIATION.

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1.—Gwenon. Just before the march to Fashoda.
The colt dressed in white with a dark mark is standing outside his quarters awaiting the gathering of the warriors.

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2.—Agwenyin. Casting the black ball over which the colt must step before the crossing.

[FACING P. 51]

19: Howell & Thomson E, G-5 (1943-1944) 1946
FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

Sudan Dot.

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1.—Each chief, after making his speech, sticks a spear into the ground before the reik as a sign of homage.

2.—The reik's party below Ataurin, with the spears and shield of Nyikang. The drummer in front is beating a tattoo as a sign of appreciation of the speech just delivered.

[FACING P 70]

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PLATE 18. Meanwhile an ox had been tethered near the drums, and a warrior stood by, spear in hand, ready for the sacrifice.

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PLATE 19. After several minutes of dancing, the crowd moved forward and knelt before the tomb.

P164B

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Opposite Fashoda. The Ame Nyikwom lead Nyikang and Dak in their advance against the Reth.

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The substitution on the stool. Nyikang has withdrawn and stands on the right. The Reth is still seated on the stool underneath Nyikang's spear (wrapped in white cloth) on the left.

Photograph: J. C. N. Donald

[FACING p. 197]

27: Munro U-5 (1918) 1918 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

any ostrich they may meet will stand until they have plucked the requisite feathers. Further they are believed to produce Nyakang from the river by stabbing a cow in sacrifice on the bank of the Nile).

When all was ready, Nyakang started on its journey with a large following and proceeded at a leisurely pace. The road is cleared for it from Kaka to Fashoda. It passed Kodok on 11th January 1918.

As Nyakang draws near, the selected Ret is supposed to go to Dabalu in Akwam and stay there for one night before the actual ceremony. In this specific instance Fallii went to Akwam three days before the ceremony and was installed in Fashoda on the 4th morning. Different chiefs gave varying answers as to the number of nights which it was essential for the Ret to stay in Dabalu: it would appear however that the Ret really goes there when everything is nearly ready; but if for any reason some delay occurs, a day or two is considered immaterial, which is in accordance with all native Sudan custom. In the present instance I understand Ajang wad Amoith of Akwam, whose duty it was had neglected to give due notice to the Southern chiefs, and so Kwa Mai[1] only arrived on the 16th instead of two days earlier.

B. — NARRATIVE (JANUARY 17TH, 1918).

I arrived Fashoda about 7.30 a.m. While waiting I examined the shrine of Nyakang[2] from outside, and the temporary huts[3] built for the Ret.

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[1] Kwa (descendants of) Mai stated by Werner, p. 108 to be founded by a man and woman, who came down from above. They left children on earth: their home is Malakal. They receive from the Ret the black bull over which the Ret steps before crossing the Khor; this is their reward for whipping on any that daily in following the Ret.

[2] The shrine of Nyakang consists of two well built circular mud huts with grass roofs surmounted by an ostrich egg and a spear blade. The whole is enclosed in a fence. The grey mud walls are painted in different coloured stripes with spots dotted on them as shown in Seligman's illustration of Nyakang at Famikang fig. 55. The guardian is an old ex-wife of the Ret; small children are also allowed to enter. No woman who is pregnant can enter the shrine. The guardian has a little hut apart.

[3] About 30 yards distant there is a practical miniature of the shrine, a temporary building completely made of grass especially erected for the Ret to live in after the installation prior to his going up to his real house on the mound.

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enclosure surrounded by a reed fence which overlaps on the side facing the central space, leaving a narrow entrance about two feet long. This is so narrow that one has to turn sideways to get through it. The narrowness of this passage and the smallness of the doorway of each house are a means of defence against possible aggressors. No intruder could rush into the small compound and take those inside by surprise. As an additional protection the passage is blocked at night with thorn branches, which serve the purpose of a barbed-wire entanglement. 351

A chief or a nyireth may have three or four huts in his enclosure. The huts are made with walls of well-puddled cotton-soil mud about five feet in height, surmounted by a high conical thatched roof. The floor is often a little below ground level with a semi-circular step sometimes decorated with an inset pattern of mother-of-pearl, coloured glass, or fragments of pottery at the threshold. One of the two huts is used as the living and sleeping room, the other for cooking and the storing of the grain supply. The fence which encloses the homestead is about eight feet high and is constructed of millet stalks closely fastened together; it is set close to the walls of the houses. On the outside it is strengthened by cross-ties of stalks bound together, and the number of these cross-ties is regulated by strict custom: an ordinary Colo may have three or four, a chief or prince up to six, and only the fences around the king's enclosure have eight. 342 [565] [591] [943] 351 [565]

The largest building in the village is the communal cattle byre which is built like an ordinary hut, but about thirty feet in diameter. The high pitched roof, because of its great span, is very heavy and has to be supported by strong branches of trees based solidly on the floor and wedged tightly against the slope of the roof. In an open space near the byre thirty or forty stakes are driven into the ground, standing perhaps a foot above it; at first sight these might give one the impression that the villagers indulge in the simple pleasure of a game of quoits in the cool of the evening when the day's work is done, but they are for the much 343 [233]

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more practical purpose of tethering the cattle as towards sunset they come winding back from the pasture. In the hot months, if there is no danger from lions, they are left all night in the open and the byre is used as a dormitory by the boys and unmarried men of the village. It is the custom, too, for the unmarried girls to sleep together in vacant huts in the village, for the sleeping hut of a household is reserved for the householder and his wife and small children.

The rear part of the store hut is taken up by an enormous circular grain basket, four feet high and the same in diameter, standing clear of the floor on a wooden, three-legged stand and safe from the depredations of white ants. Whenever possible, cooking is done outside, but during the rains it is done over a fire of sticks or millet stalks burning in a hollow scooped out in the floor near the wall. A variety of pots clutters the floor space: the large earthenware water pot, an earthenware pot and a shallow iron dish for cooking, small beer pots, a number of drinking bowls made from the tough rinds of gourds neatly halved and dried in the sun. The roofing poles, resting on the mud walls and rising to an apex, form convenient places for tucking away household goods and personal treasures. Such an item one cannot fail to notice is that of several large heads of grain; these are stored for the next season's planting, and no matter how desperate the food situation may become, they will remain untouched, for the next year's supply of food depends on this stock of seed. Behind the poles also may be found a fragment of a mirror, a couple of cigarette tins holding a little oil or a handful of beads, a girl's blue dancing cloth or even the good wife's best Sunday frock, run up for her by the Sisters from some material brought from Kodok, probably some dreadful riot of green and red and yellow, hideous indeed to Western eyes, but to the proud owner more delightful than any Paris creation. Sometimes, to a visitor's distress, a line is slung across the hut on which hang dried fish or strips of meat. The high tone of these delicacies, the myriads of flies they attract and the thick, black smoke of the fire which, having no means of getting away, fills the hut, do not make

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the place very inviting, or, if one must enter, tempt one to linger. One is happy to conclude one's business and escape to the comfort of the hut opposite.

This is the living and sleeping hut, and is usually much more clean and tidy than the other. The hard earth floor is neatly smoothed over with mud and carefully swept. Several cow hides hang on the walls or rest against them, and one of these is placed for the visitor to sit upon crosslegged, or a small platform made of light ambac wood may be brought forward for his accommodation. Lying against the wall is also the tall war shield of toughened hippopotamus hide belonging to the master of the house and his two spears, one his fighting spear, seven feet in length with a broad, smooth, highly polished, leaf-shaped blade on a straight, slender shaft of brown wood; the other his fishing spear, a foot shorter in length and with a long, narrow, triangular blade armed with ugly, serrated barbs. Inside the hut we may find several men; some sit in the neat way the Shilluk have with one foot tucked beneath them, a posture impossible for a stiff-jointed European, but one which they can maintain for long periods without the slightest discomfort. The host is dispensing beer to his guests from a large pot placed in the centre of the floor, and a generous bowl, holding about a quart, will be offered to you. This beer is made from fermented millet, and looks, and tastes, rather like cold cocoa. Courtesy demands that you take some, so you sip a little slowly, balance the bowl in your lap for a while, take another small drink and hand the bowl to your neighbour who finishes it off with avidity. You linger over a cigarette while the others pass round a pipe filled with rank, home-grown tobacco, or, if this is scarce, with charcoal. A Shilluk pipe has a large bowl made of clay, fire baked, fancifully carved and picked out in red and white and black; into this is fitted a wooden stem, two feet long and an inch in diameter, with a bulbous mouthpiece made from the stem of a gourd. With a complete disregard for hygiene a member of the party takes the pipe from the man next to him, puts it to his mouth, sucks vigorously for a few moments, his cheeks going in and out

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Immediately every dog in the district is awake and alert and the peace of the night is shattered by a cacophony of furious barking. In the mission we thump our wet pillows and call down blessings on the dogs and the hyena. Eventually quiet is restored as the hyena's howls die away in the distance. The village sleeps.

Such then, in brief, is a description of Shilluk village life, yet our understanding of these people would be very incomplete without a more detailed picture of their activities, their work and their play. To them, as to most of the inhabitants of the continent of Africa, the common saying, 'to work like a black', is scarcely applicable, for the Shilluk is no fonder of work than the next man, and he is not one of those restless individuals who are never happy unless busy with hand and brain making and mending and improving. Yet there are times when he must bestir himself, for he is essentially self-supporting. From soil and river he must provide himself with what he requires for food and shelter, and beyond this bare minimum of subsistence he must strive to get something more which he can sell or exchange for a cloth for himself and his wife, for a handful of salt and a drop of oil. If his labours yield no such margin, he may have to offer his services to the mission or the trader to earn the money to procure what he cannot provide himself. The Shilluk is, and indeed has to be, a man of all trades. To get the grain for his food he must farm the land, and although his methods of husbandry may be primitive, he is expert in the traditional way of farming. In fishing he is skilled in the use of the net, harpoon, spear and fish trap, and gets the best results possible from these methods. His house is neat and strongly built, and, according to one missionary of wide experience, is among the best thatched of all African houses. To cross the Nile on his fishing expeditions he must have a boat of some kind, and from a light, cork-like wood called ambach which grows plentifully in the Detwok area he constructs a beautiful, unsinkable canoe, light enough to be carried by one man, yet able to carry three people in perfect safety. To roof his house and make fences around it he uses the

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about mid-October, and then the large heads of grain are cut off and stacked on tables to dry out before being loaded into baskets and carried off to the village by the women. The stalks are left standing in the fields to be collected when they are needed. For the time being, then, the Shilluk is contented, having plenty to eat and drink. If the harvest has not been too good, he still has enough food for the next six months, and beyond that he refuses to look. Why should he worry about next year when he might be dead by then? His wife, equally thriftless, will load her basket with the golden grain and set off to the nearest merchants, perhaps ten or fifteen miles away, to exchange it for a handful of piastres. She knows full well that before the next rains have even begun she will have to go back to the same merchant to buy back her grain at twice the price she was given for it, or watch her family struggle in semi-starvation for the remainder of the year, but that does not deter her from crossing the road from the grain store to the general store run by the same merchant and squandering her money on a few strings of beads, a few feet of copper wire, a small mirror or such other trifles.

In the new year, when the swamps and khors are draining back to the Nile and the tall grass is drying and yellowing under the fierce heat of the sun, it is time to think of re-building and re-thatching. A well-made house will stand the rigours of perhaps ten rainy seasons; a good thatched roof for two or three. After the roof has been renewed three times, the cracking and crumbling walls are beyond further patching up, and the house must be pulled down and rebuilt. Building is a community affair, and the builders are paid for their labour in beer, the brewing of large quantities of which is an essential preparation for the work.

If a new hut is to be built, a circle of about twelve feet in diameter is marked out on the ground and a shallow trench dug round the circumference. Stakes are driven into this every six inches, so that they stand four feet above the ground, and these are bound together by coarsely plaited grass ropes woven around and in and out from bottom to top.

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342 Meanwhile a shallow pit is dug nearby, and to the broken soil sand and water are added, the mixture being puddled by vigorous treading till it has the consistency of a thick, sticky paste. When the rope weaving is finished, this mud paste is plastered on the wall within and without at the same time, until the whole is a solid mass about a foot thick. Another party of men is busy in the meantime preparing the framework of the roof; the older men make six thick rings of grass completely bound around with rope, graded from twelve feet to one foot in diameter; the younger men select six straight tree branches about seven feet long and as thick as a man's arm, and bind these to the largest of the grass rings with rope to form the base of a cone. The remaining rings are then tied inside the cone from base to apex which is then overlaid with millet stalks, securely fastened, and the framework is now complete and ready for lifting on to the top of the wall. These various stages of the operation are marked by the drinking of beer; the bowls are first filled when the mud is slapped on to the wall, a second time when the walls are finished off, and lastly when the roof is secured in its place. This marks the end of community labour, for the thatching can be done by one man assisted by a boy to throw the bundles of grass up to him.

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342 The thatcher begins at the base of the roof tying bundles of fine grass around the edge to form the eaves; the bundles overlap and hang about a foot over the edge of the framework. Sheaves of coarser grass are laid over these and fastened into position by rope laced through the millet stalks of the framework; at the apex the grass is gathered to a point, tightly bound with rope and neatly trimmed off. When the thatching is done, the women clean up the floor inside the hut and smooth it over with mud so that it has a firm, cement-like surface, and the house is then ready for occupation. This is a typical Shilluk dwelling; the king's own house may be a little better built and more elaborately thatched, but it will not differ in size or construction from this. Tradition must be observed, and as long as the king is content to live in a round house with mud walls, no window and only

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a small hole for entrance, no Shilluk may dare to build himself, say, a square hut, or improve the light and ventilation of the traditional dwelling by putting in a window.

The Shilluk is a fine fisherman, adept in the use of harpoon, fishing spear and net. The harpoon he uses consists of a loose barbed head of iron which is fitted into the socket of a long bamboo pole to which it is attached by a length of thin but extremely strong twine. When a large fish is caught on the barb, it jerks the head from the socket, and is then played by the fisherman until he is able to finish it off with his fish spear. The spear itself is normally used in the shallows of the river or swamp; the man casts it repeatedly into the soft mud as he walks along, hoping to spear the mud fish which lie in great numbers under the surface.

The use of the net by an expert is a delightful thing to watch; the net is large, fine-meshed and circular in shape, weighted round the edge with pieces of lead. The fisherman gathers it in folds over one arm and casts it with a clean, effortless sweep; it falls lightly on the water in a perfect circle, sinks slowly to the bottom and then is slowly gathered in. If it is empty, it is folded and cast again with the same easy, graceful motion.

Fishing is done all the year round by individuals, but the real season is from March to May when the river and the large inland water-courses (the khors) are at their lowest level. During this time several villages will combine together to fish a certain khor, and as women as well as men join in, it becomes a real community effort. The day before that appointed for the fishing, men will go to the khor and block up its outlets, then on the day itself there is a general exodus from the villages, the men carrying harpoons and spears, and canoes if the river has to be crossed, the women carrying heavy nets, and cooking pots too if the start is early. Arrived at the khor, the women fix the nets on poles firmly pushed into the deep mud, side by side, right across one end, leaving no way of escape. The men line up abreast at the other end and move slowly towards the nets, thrusting into the mud

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Photo: E. E. Evans-Pritchard

A drudge that means a trudge. Shilluk women set off for the Nile to fetch water. From Detwok—a mile each way

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301
302
291
342
252
412
415

Photo: Dr. F. Spilsbury

Girl pounding grain as a preliminary to grinding

[facing p. 84]

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142
291
801
302
342
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A Shilluk putting the finishing touches to a spear-shaft
[facing p. 85]

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* 747 drops) in about an hour if he is on his bicycle, but if he is
[632] on foot he will be two-and-a-half to three hours on the road.
[647] He looks around for the catechist and eventually finds him on the outside of the prison fence, chatting through the wire to some of his friends on the other side who have had the misfortune to be found out. The catechist jumps up when he sees the priest approaching and hurries to meet him and assure him that the man is still alive and very anxious to see him. He tells him that the village is but a short distance away (actually it turns out to be the best part of four miles through the forest behind Kodok), and proceeds to conduct him thither through a labyrinth of paths and tracks.

Eventually they arrive at the village, a huddle of half-a-dozen miserable huts, and cross to the one where the sick man is lying. Several mangy pi-dogs drowsing in the sun rouse up at the entrance of the stranger and make their usual attack. The priest crawls through the narrow entrance
[342] into the hut and coming from dazzling sunlight into semi-darkness, for there are no windows in the hut and the grass mat that was removed from the door to give him entrance has been replaced, it takes him some time to accustom himself to his surroundings. He tells someone squatting near the entrance to remove the mat from the door, since besides the lack of light there is also a decided lack of air, and the temperature, high enough outside, is well nigh unbearable inside. Furthermore there is a haze of smoke from a long
[276] Shilluk pipe which is being handed round the visitors to the
[515] sick bed, and an unbelievable stench arising from foul tobacco, decaying fish and unwashed, oiled and ash-smeared Shilluk bodies.

The first thing the priest does is to clear the place of its occupants—including the fish. He is relieved to find that the young woman suckling a baby is not the sick man's wife; indeed he has not got a wife, so that is one complication the less, anyway. Then, soaked with perspiration and blinded by the drops that run down into his eyes, he turns to the motionless bundle of rags lying on a skin on the floor. The
763 * 747 man is conscious and evidently glad that the priest has come.

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and so we parted. The next evening, after tea, I mounted my bicycle and pedalled leisurely towards the village. Half-way there I met the father of one of the school boys, and we chatted for a few minutes about the progress, or rather lack of progress, his son was making. Then he asked me casually where I was going, and I replied just as casually that I was going to Pabiu to baptize so-and-so. 'So-and-so?' he said. 'He died half an hour ago.' I stared at him in amazement for a moment, and then, jumping on my bike, pedalled furiously to the village. It was only too true. I could hear the shrill crying of the women as I approached. The men were digging the grave and the body, not yet cold, had been prepared for burial. Whether the lad had been "helped" out of this world, I could not say; I baptized him conditionally, and could but commend him and his good intentions to the mercy of God. Then, sick at heart, I rode slowly back to the mission.

One does not easily associate humour with the administration of the Sacraments to a person who is dying, but sometimes there can be, in retrospect, a funny side even to these solemn and awful occasions. Mention has been made in a previous chapter of Rachael, the old blind leper woman of Pabiu. Poor Rachael was long a-dying, and weary though she must have been of this world she had hung on to life long beyond anybody's expectation. I had long since given her the last Sacraments and every day expected to hear that she had gone to heaven. One morning the Sister told me that the old woman did seem to be near her end and probably would not last the morning, so I went across to Pabiu to render her what assistance I could in her agony. The entrance to a Shilluk hut is a round hole no more than waist high so that one wishing to enter must bend double or even go on hands and knees to do so. Furthermore, the inside of the hut is in semi-darkness, and entering from the bright sunlight it takes a moment or two to accustom oneself to the surroundings. Hence, when I ducked through the doorway, I almost pitched headlong over a shapeless bundle